LePrint traces publishing shortcuts

In order to print all of the type-setting variations associated with a desktop publishing program you don't necessarily have to use a special publishing program.

You don't even have to use a laser printer.

For modest printing needs there's a program that works with simple commands and a dot matrix printer.

Many programs perform desktop publishing functions more simply than the full-blown, well-known, high-priced packages such as PageMaker and Ventura.

Fitting into that category is LePrint a program that enhances the printing of data from other programs.

LePrint will take text from virtually any program and, using its own libraries of type faces, produce desktop publishing-like text and graphics on either dot matrix or laser printers.

Here are some of the type-enhancing features of this program:

■ Positions text anywhere on a page. Using a variety of positioning schemes, you can pinpoint

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where type will appear on a page.

When printing text that did not come from a word processor, you'll appreciate this program's commands for margins, columns, centering, justification and line height.

■ Offers a wide range of character sizes and types. LePrint has its own library of fonts. Five font families come standard with the program.

If you buy the extended version for $495 you get 28 fonts. Or, you can buy additional fonts at five to six to a disk for $75 each.

Any of the type families can be sized from a minuscule 4 points to a giant 720 points.

■ Inserts graphics. LePrint can integrate graphics files from many popular graphics programs such as PC Paintbrush and Micro-

soft Windows Paint.

In addition, any LePrint file can be saved in graphics form to export to other programs.

■ Draws rules and boxes. You don't have to worry if your printer handles the IBM extended character set. With this program you can precisely draw lines and boxes of any thickness anywhere on a page.

LePrint is a "command based" typesetting system — you embed commands within your data file that control all of the printing options. Anyone who has used WordStar will be right at home with these "dot commands."

Using this program you can produce type effects similar to some other typesetting programs: angled or circular type like Spinfont, and multilined and multifaced type on a dot matrix printer like Name Tag Kit.

The other programs, however, perform their specialized jobs better and easier.

On the downside, with LePrint you can't see the effects of your imbedded commands until you actually print. This is a big handicap

on a page layout of any complexity. A lot of back and forth tweaking of commands and re-printing is necessary to get all the intended effects right.

Also, while LePrint is much easier to use than desktop publishing programs, it isn't really easy. In my office, I rely on a technical assistant to handle the rough spots.

■ The bottom line: Full-blown desktop publishing programs aren't appropriate for most businesses, because they're so hard to master.

A program like LePrint, on the other hand, provides many desktop publishing features with an easier-to-learn command set. If your typesetting needs are modest, this program is a good place to start.

Leprint is available from Le Baugh Software Corp., 10824 Old Mill Road, Suite 6, Omaha, Neb., 68154 for $195.

Hillel Segal's column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars, and books designed to enhance business productivity.